Next, let us consider the quality and quantity of desk top light reflectance: A basic principle of illuminating engineering requires that things around the pupil's note book or reading, i.e., the critical task, must be neither too bright nor too dark (3). A desk top that reflects too much or too little light is not just psychologically distracting, but actually puts undue stress on the iris muscles of the eye (4). To prevent this, desk tops should have a colour which reflects 35% to 50% of the light and be of non-glossy finish. (3) Most light green, beige or natural birch tops meet the colour requirement but they nearly all have a glossy finish. It seems that the designers' desire to provide maximum durability has caused them to produce this undesirable glare-producing finish.

Conclusions

It appears that, from the point of view of the child's requirements, there are currently two weaknesses in modern desk design. First, the slope of the desk is too flat, causing the child to crouch forward and downward to get an adequate view of his critical task. Second, the top is too glossy, causing the child to distort further his posture in order to avoid reflected glare from windows or lights.

It is obvious that many difficulties are involved in correcting these faults. However, in view of the benefits to the children, designers should make an effort to produce a desk top with slope high enough to allow good visibility from an erect sitting position. They should also produce durable, low gloss finishes. Meanwhile, school boards should choose desks with maximum slope and dullest top finish.

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